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Folk Culture Of Dakshin Dinajpur

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Abstract

Folk culture refers to a culture traditionally practiced by a small, homogeneous, rural group living in relative isolation from other groups. Historically, handed down through oral tradition. Folk culture is local, small and tightly bound to the immediate landscape. Dakshin Dinajpur is a treasure of rich culture and history. There are varieties of culture, music, literature, arts, crafts, etc. The origin of folk culture of Dakshin Dinajpur is deeply embedded in the religion, festival, education, health, emotion, love, marriage, entertainment, loneliness and in the variety range of human sentiments. Unfortunately, with passage of time, influx of urbanization, globalization and westernization have forced Bengal folk culture to confront a tremendous challenge at present day.

Keywords: Folk Song & Literature, Oral Traditions, Folklore, Rhyme..

Introduction

Unwritten literature of any group whether having writing or being without it. In short, all elements of culture reinvent society and culture was bidding within the folk culture. Excluding the human elements will be crippled. Folk and ritual elements changes, not changing its original forms". Renewed cultural theorist Raymond Williams said, "Culture is ordinary, not elite, calling for a democratic approach of life". According to Raymond Williams, culture is one of the difficult words to define. This is because it has today several different through related meanings which have emerge at particular moments throughout the history. In the Renaissance, culture's sense of tending crops (which still exists in the terms such horticulture and bacterial culture) was extended through metaphor to the purely human endeavor of culture - i.e. cultivating - the mind and manners. By the late 18thc. term - particularly its equivalent in French and German - was increasingly used as a abstract and independent norm to designate the process of becoming cultured and civilized, and was employed as a synonym for civilization. During the Romantic period, however, the assumption that human history progressed in unilinear fashion towards a civilized future came under increasing criticism; the notion that distinct cultures or way of life, characterized different peoples and periods (e.g. folk culture, indian culture) gained currency. Also during this period, the term became associated with practice, which an increasingly materialist, industrial civilization was judge not to value: art, literature, music, religion and so on. In the Victorian era, Mathew Arnold famously defined culture in his 'Culture and Anarchy' as 'the best that has been thought and said' in the world.

Nowadays, the study of folk culture has been strengthened in different literacy writings. It has found priority is the language of literature. Though it was introducing from primitive but there was no importance at same time. The actual history of the country is known by the study of folk culture. Native American author Leslie Marmon Silko said, "Folk Culture has always contained a concerned for human condition". Folk Culture creates folk literature. Both are complement to each other and synonymous. Folk culture is one of the main elements of folk literature. This folklore is popularly expansion and spread by speaking from man to man. There is an inner relation between folk literature and written literature. The folk literature become developed based on some rituals, customs and legends etc. Gradually it is becoming part of society. Folk culture contained culture and society of Dakshin Dinajpur at same time. Folk culture and folklore are available in this part of North Bengal. Needless to say, the folk literature more powerful and older than written documens. Nobel laureate author Abdulrazak Gunrah wrote, "The transference of oral tradition or writing and print does not destroy its validity as folklore but rather while freezing or fixing its form, helps to keep it alive and to diffuse it among those to whom it is not native or fundamental. For the folk memory forgets as much as it transmits and improves. In the reciprocity of oral and written tradition and the flux of cultural change and exchange, revival plays as important a part as survival, popularization is as essential as scholarship, and the find responsibility rests upon accumulate and collective test and judgement of the many rather than few".

In this contextual, the quotation of Levi Struss is mentionable, "As universal structures but precisely because the immediate functions of the ritual change. The kind of offender subjected to rough music are not the same, from one country to another or from one country to next". Folk culture is something which the individual has in common with his fellows. Just as all have eyes and hands and speech. It is not contrary to himself as individual but a part of his equipment. It makes possible-perhaps it might defined that which constitutes his rapport with his particular segments of mankind. Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiang'o wrote, "Culture teaches us to see into things. Folk culture allows us to see outward from within things". In short, all elements of culture reinvent society and culture was bidding within the folk culture. Excluding the human elements will be crippled. Folk and ritual elements changes, not changing its original forms.

Folk literature of Dakshin Dinajpur society

Folk literature by its nature is conditioned by the land and its environment. The temperature climate of Dakshin Dinajpur, where people do not need to struggle much for a living, tends to make the people easy going. At the same nature attunes them to appreciate nature and its changing faces, to sing arou the land and the rivers or lakes, arou the rain or the lack of it, arou pleasures or pains of different seasons. The rich folk literature of Dakshin Dinajpur includes folk songs, ballads, folk tales, folk dramas, rhymes, incarnations, riddles and proverbs that draw upon indigenous culture of this land but which through the centuries, have also absorbed alien cultures and been modified in the process. Folk songs are set to tune and passed down orally from generation to generation. Noam Chomsky said, "Real popular culture is folk art - coalminer's songs and so forth". Folk songs express the lifestyle of rural people with all their hopes, expectations, sorrows and dreams. Everything, starting from individuals to society and from religion to occupations, influences the form of folk songs. The BARAMASI (song of the twelve months) describes the joys and sorrows of the village women through twelve months of Bangala year. The vast expenses of the land, the dominant horizon, the sun and the clouds, tiring afternoons and days inform the BHAWAIYA (song of land). Folk songs are also inspired by the search for the perfect being and communal harmony as in BAUL songs. Muslim culture added JARIGAN (the song of sorrow, from sari, Parsi an for sorrow) which describes the sorrows and sufferings associated with Muharram. Folk songs may be sung by professional or armature singers. Bagan or Bayati are professional singers who sing in groups, while Kavials take part ingit song tournaments. CHANGRA in ALKAP and GHATU in GHATUSONGS are professional singers and dancers. Udas Bauls sing a part of the or mystic search. Farmers, working peoples, cowherds, boatman all sing songs while working and resting. Worldly love is central to

the folk songs that describe love between men and women. Heavenly love is the subject of devotional songs. Bodily love, lust, quarrel between men and women, and union and estrangement are manifest in songs like ALKAP, BARAMSI, MEYELIGITI, KSHAN, HOLIGAN etc. some examples are "Bane Nanur ba suru bajila re" (Krishna plays a flute in the wood, ALKAP), "Maghna na masete madhava mathuray gamana" (I go to mathurapur before mach comes, BARAMASI), "Tui more nidayay kaliya re" (you, my cruel lover, BHAWAYA) etc. Although replated with words like Radha, Krishna, Subal, Mathura, Jamuna, Banshi, etc. these songs do not have any religious or spiritual overtone. They rather deal with humanity and worldly wisdom.

Folk tales also pass from one generation gap another generation in folk society. Folk tales are in prose and can be both simple and complex, based on subject, meaning, and form, folk tales may be divided into twelve classes in Dakshin Dinajpur : fairy tales, mythical tales, religious tales adventure tales, heroic stories, sage stories, historical tales, legends, animal stories, fables, comic stories and exempla. Early marriage, polygamy, dowry, the doctrine of rebirth, hatred between co-wives, stepmother's envy, repression of the powerful greed, sufferings of the weak and poor, uneven distribution of wealth, etc. are the subjects of folktales. The Heros of Dinajpuriya folk tales are primarily dependent on fate and divinity, rather than on intellect, wisdom, labour, struggle or work, they at times dependent on magic as well.

Folk drama usually has a two part presentation. The first part has a preamble, instrumental choir and prayers to gods, while second part contains acting, song, dance, narration, dialogue, etc. Folk dramas usually have a mythical, historical, religious and political flavour. Some examples of folk dramas are BHASAN, JATRA, KSHAN, ALKAP, PUPETRY.

The JARIGAN is based on the tragedy of KARBALA, which is performed mainly at DARGAS (shrines) is accompanied by songs, dances and acting. On the the occasion of MUHRRAM, a group of ten to twelve young men from JARI team roam around, with dancing and acting. The group has a main singer, others just chant the refrain and clap their hands. Because of acting, JARIGAN is also known as JARIJATRA at Kumarganj religion. PALAGANs are similar to JATRA and include both dancing and acting. Popular PALAGANs include BAIDNIR PALA of GAJAN festival in Gangarampur and GAJIR PALA at Tapan.

Rhymes of poetic compositions provide entertainment as well as education, based on their subjects, rhymed may be classified into nursery rhymes, social rhymes, historical rhymes, satirical rhymes, occupational rhymes. Some rhymes are play rhymes, recited by young boys during games such as HADUDU, KANAMACHI etc. Many rhymes are recited for fun, others include people on ethics, morality, mathematics, etc. Some rhymes originated in historical events and preserve the memory of those events in seemingly innocuous rhymes. Thus, the rhyme " Chele ghumolo, para jurolo, bargi ele deshe" (when the children fall asleep, silent set in, the Maratha cavalry attacks our country) speaks of Maratha inroads into Bengal. Another rhyme recalls the activity of Christian missionaries, who converted people, while indigo-planters starved farmers, who were not allowed to cultivate crops other than indigo : "Jay mare padti dhare, bhat mare nil band are, bidal chokhe hands he do, nilkuttar nil kando" (the christian clergies make lose their caste, while indigo planters make people starve, the cat eyed indigo planters, who live in indigo bungalows, look blue goblins).

Mantras are rhymed incantations pronounced to ward off danger or bring some boon. When people want rain they recite, "Ay brishti jhepe dhan debo mepe" (Oh rain, come down to us, we'll pay you with rice). When they want to rain stop, they say, "Lebur patay karamcha, meghkhan ure ja" (I put a sour fruit called karamcha on lemon leaves, Hey clouds, fly away). Some mantras are chanted to bring misfortune to others, for example a mantra is recited to prevent someone to make cakes : "A ola chal baker pak, jemon pitha temon thak" (foul rice and bad cooking, let the cake remain as it is). There are incantations to protect wealth from theft and the body from evil influence of ghost and goblins. There are mantras for protection from fire, snakes flood, venom etc.

Proverbs are the shortest compositions for wit, learning and entertainment. They span from pithy sentence to rhymed couplets. But however short, they are composed on the basis of human experience, pragmatic, consideration and wisdom. Mahipal of Kushumandi block is rich of proverbs.

Folklores among Dakshin Dinajpur society

Folklore means folk traditions of human society, customs, beliefs, proverbs, traditions of folk, all forms of social customs and beliefs, the stories, songs, words, and became proverbial. The usefulness of the folk culture in the real life of society is more than that of written form. A.K. Ramanujan wrote, "Folklore is that part of people's culture which is preserved consciously or unconsciously in belief and practices, customs and observances of general currency : in myths, legends and fables of common acceptance; and in arts and crafts which express the temper and genius of a group rather than of an individual. Because it is repository of popular 'climate' folklore serves as a constant source and from of reference for more formal literature and art; but it is distinct therefrom in that it is essentially of people by the people and for the people". Different elements of folk culture are hidden in Dakshin Dinajpur's rural society but those were not preferred literary value due to unwritten form till 1990s. With the contribution of governmental bodies and others folk culture of Dakshin Dinajpur is now as a separate branch of modern Bengali language and literature. Most of the places of Dakshin Dinajpur is belong to under rural society and civilization. All villages are full ambience of ancient and medieval affairs. Folk culture is sole holder and bearer of society. Each of main components of rural culture of Dakshin Dinajpur is folk culture. Past glories of are hidden inside those components of folk culture. So called elite people did not care that. Thus researchers has started to search folk components in different parts of Dakshin Dinajpur. It is known that in order to review them, which is something like past; they are hidden in folk culture. As critic F. R. Leavis said, "The traditions, customs and beliefs of people as they appear in non literary tales, songs and sayings. The basis requirement of living of folklore is that it be tradition, widely current and transmitted primary through memory and practice rather than the printed page".

Conclusion

Now, many different forms of folk culture are threatened by modernization. The globalization diffusion of popular culture threatens subservience of women to men that s embedded in many folk customs. As societies modernize, the individual becomes increasingly important, gradually replacing the family, community, or occupational groups as the besir unit of society. Television and internet introduce individuals to the lifestyles and values of different cultures around the world. Rural people of Dakshin Dinajpur begin to adopt western culture. Like other folk society, Dakshin Dinajpur's folk society is changing gradually. But board cultural heritages of the this land - BHAWAIYA, JARIGAN, KSHAN, riddles, folklores etc. leaves imprints on values that endure despite of modernization as T. S. Eliot wrote, "Cultural values are an enduring and autonomous influence on society".

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